

On-Board Diagnostics (OBD) Testing

What is OBD?

Beginning in the early 1980's, many vehicles were using electronics and on-board computers to regulate some of the vehicle's engine control systems such as fuel and ignition. Vehicle manufacturers had to develop ways to diagnose problems generated by the new electronic hardware being used in new vehicles, so the first on-board diagnostics (OBD) systems were developed.

Why do we have OBD?

The federal government has mandated that all vehicles built since 1996 be equipped with certain on-board diagnostic systems for emissions control. The function of the OBD system is to alert the motorist to possible problems in the emission control system and other engine-related components before the problems become a major concern.

What makes up an OBD system?

In today's electronically controlled engines, sensors monitor different components of the engine. The on-board computer controls all of these sensors and monitors the vehicle's emission control components to determine whether they are working properly. These components, along with the diagnostic software in the on-board computer, make up the OBD system.

How does my OBD system let me know there may be a problem?

A light that reads "Service Engine Soon," or "Check Engine," or that displays the engine symbol indicates the vehicle needs diagnosis by a qualified OBD auto technician. If necessary repairs are made in a timely manner, more costly repairs to the emission control systems, the engine, and other systems may be avoided.



How is the OBD test performed?

1. The vehicle's engine will be turned off and then turned on again to verify that the "Check Engine" light works and that it does not remain on while the vehicle is running.
2. An inspector will attach a connector to the vehicle's on-board computer system.
3. The test equipment will look for emission-related fault codes that are stored in the vehicle's computer memory.

4. If the vehicle has stored any emission-related readiness or fault codes, these codes will be printed on the Vehicle Inspection Report given to you at the end of the test process.

How will Indiana implement OBD testing?

On January 2, 2002, the Indiana Clean Air Car Check vehicle emission test stations in Lake, Porter, Clark and Floyd counties began performing on-board diagnostic tests on vehicles that are 1996 model year and newer. The on-board diagnostic system (OBDII) check replaced the current tailpipe emission test for these model year vehicles.

A Vehicle Inspection Report is issued to the motorist that indicates whether the vehicle passes or fails. If the vehicle fails the OBD check, the Diagnostic Trouble Codes identified are listed on the form. This information helps repair technicians make appropriate repairs to the vehicle.

How can I get my OBD system tested if I don't live in Clark, Floyd, Lake or Porter County?

Vehicles may be taken to any reputable mechanic who has knowledge of OBD systems and who possesses the necessary and appropriate tools to connect with your vehicle's on-board diagnostics system. Independent shops as well as dealerships for major manufacturers may be able to check your systems. You should ask specifically if the shop performs this service. Also, the owner's manual to your vehicle can provide information on the specifics of your vehicle's OBD system.